



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 4, 2008

FACT SHEET

MAYOR ANNOUNCES NEW WAIVER FOR CITY SEWER SYSTEM

DECISION BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WILL ALLOW CITY TO AVOID \$1.5 BILLION CONSTRUCTION COSTS AND RATE HIKES

Mayor Jerry Sanders today announced that the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has granted the City's request for a waiver of secondary treatment requirements at the Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant. The EPA's decision acknowledges the City's success in current treatment efforts at the plant. The agency also lauded the City for maintaining extensive records showing that effluent from the plant does not appear to have a detrimental impact on the ocean environment off the Point Loma coast.

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE SUPPORTED THE WAIVER REQUEST

The Mayor asked for the five-year waiver last year. He based his decision to seek the waiver on extensive environmental data to the City. In October of last year, an independent Scientific Technical Review Committee made up largely of scientists from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography released a well documented report concluding that the Treatment Plant does not have a detrimental impact on the ocean environment. That report confirmed information provided to the Mayor by staff from the City's Metropolitan Wastewater Department and led the Mayor to seek, and confirm, approval from the City Council for moving forward on the waiver request.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF SECONDARY OUTWEIGHED BY IMPACTS

The Mayor also accepted information from system experts that showed that in order to build a secondary treatment plant the City would have to carve into the coastal bluffs surrounding the Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant. The result of that action would include the movement of more than 1.2 million tons of earth, much of it located next to very sensitive habitats.

WAIVER HELPS RATEPAYERS AVOID MAJOR INCREASES

If the EPA had denied the waiver, the City's wastewater system ratepayers would have been forced to pay the estimated \$1.5 billion cost for secondary treatment facilities. Meeting those

costs would have entailed a series of rate increases beginning this year. The rate increases for secondary treatment would have been in addition to the sewer rate and water rate increases already approved by the City Council earlier this year.

NEXT STEPS INCLUDE PUBLIC INPUT AND LONG-TERM PLANNING FOR TREATMENT SYSTEM

The EPA's decision to grant the waiver opens a public comment process that will culminate in hearings before the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). The Board will discuss the hearing schedule at its meeting of December 10 and will finalize a formal public comment period now tentatively scheduled to conclude in late January.

The EPA has also indicated to the City that it must consider options for further improving its wastewater treatment system. Those improvements will be considered by the EPA should the City choose to seek another waiver from secondary treatment standards following the expiration of one granted today. Mayor Sanders has committed City staff to exploring each of the viable options for improving the treatment system as the City moves through this waiver period.